

Cyber Security and Your Summer Vacation

The summer vacation season is well underway and for many of us that means lounging on sunny beaches, reading a book under a shade tree or hitting the road for a new adventure. It can also mean identity theft and other crimes if we aren't careful about our online activities and protecting our information. Cyber-crime does not take a summer vacation, and for this reason, we need to remain vigilant. Fortunately, by following some best practices, we can minimize the risk of becoming the next statistic.

Save the Social Media Vacation Posts Until You Get Back Home

It may be tempting to post details of where and when you'll be traveling, but don't. By revealing such specifics, you are providing information that could be used by criminals to target your home while you're gone. Another common scam involves compromising email accounts to contact your friends or family with requests for help, claiming that you were robbed while on vacation and need money. Sending private posts and photos during your vacation to family and friends is ok, but if you post them publicly, you increase the risk of someone using that information for malicious activities. Also, make sure your children understand what, and when, they should post regarding your vacation plans.

Don't Use Public Computers and Public Wireless Access for Sensitive Transactions

Whether you're entertaining the kids by streaming a video on a tablet, downloading new travel apps on your smartphone or even taking your tablet poolside, there are precautions you should take to make sure your personal information is safe.

Wi-Fi spots in airports, hotels, train stations, coffee shops, and other public places can be convenient, but they're often not secure, and can leave you at risk. If you're online through an unsecured network, you should be aware that individuals with malicious intent may have established a Wi-Fi network with the intent to eavesdrop on your connection. This could allow them to steal your credentials, financial information, or other sensitive and personal information. It's also possible they could infect your system with malware. Any free Wi-Fi

should be considered to be "unsecure." Therefore, be cautious about the sites you visit and the information you release.

Consider turning off features on your computer or mobile devices that allow you to automatically connect to Wi-Fi. Also consider using a cellular 3G/4G connection, which is generally safer than a Wi-Fi connection.

Protect Your Smartphone, Laptop, or Other Portable Devices While Traveling

Don't let your devices out of your sight. Just as your wallet contains lots of important and personal information that you wouldn't want to lose, so too do your portable devices. Never store your laptop as checked luggage. If there is a room safe available at your hotel, use it to securely store your devices.

Make sure your laptop and other mobile devices have the latest software installed. Your device manufacturer should notify you whenever an update is available.

Use of security software is a must. Many of these programs can also locate a missing or stolen phone, tablet or other similar device. These programs will back up your data and can even remotely wipe all data from the phone if it is reported stolen. Make sure you have strong passwords, and encryption where possible, on these devices in case they are lost or stolen.

For More Information:

For more information about how to stay safe in cyberspace, visit the Center for Internet Security at www.cisecurity.org.